Project I.D. No. 97

NAME: 橋本 Hashimoto, Masao DATE OF BIRTH: 1900 PLACE OF BIRTH: Shizuoka
Age: 74 Sex: M Marital Status: M Education: 8 yrs.

PRE-WAR: (Jumped ship)
Date of arrival in U.S.: 1919 Age: 19 M.S. S Port of entry: Seattle
Occupation/s: 1. Railroad worker 2. Chauffeur 3. Farmer
Place of residence: 1. Montana 2. Seattle 3. Brooks, Oregon
Religious affiliation: Christian church
Community organizations/activities:

EVACUATION:
Name of assembly center: Portland
Name of relocation center: Hunt
Dispensation of property: Names of bank/s:
Jobs held in camp: 1. Dish washer 2.
Jobs held outside of camp: ~~Piched potatoe and sugar~~ beets
Left camp to go to: ~~Falls, Idaho~~

POST-WAR:
Date returned to West Coast: May 1943
Address/es: 1. Ontario, Oregon 2. Wintersburg, Ca.
3. San Jose, Ca.
Religious affiliation: ~~Christian church~~
Activities: 1. 2. 3.
If deceased, date, place and age at time of death:

Name of interviewer: Takarabe Date: 12/11/74 Place: San Jose, Ca.
Translater; Unlisted

T: Please tell me your name.

H: My name is Masao Hashimoto.

Q: Where were you born?

A: I was born in Shizuoka Prefecture.

Q: When were you born?

A: I was born on June 29, 1900. I will be 74 years old in June.

Q: How old were you when you came to America?

A: Iwas 19 years old.

Q: How much education did you have in Japan?

A: I had 8 years of education in Japan.

Q: Were your parents in Japan?

A: Yes, they were.

Q: What kind of a man was your father?

A: He was a farmer.

Q: Was he a strict man?

A: He was rather a strict man.

Q: How about your mother?

A: She was a gentle woman.

Q: What do you remember about your parents?

A: I don't have any special memory of them.

Q: What was the religion of the family?

A: It was the Zen sect of Buddhism.

Q: Were they devout Buddhists?

A: No, they weren't.

Q: Did your father own the farmland?

A: Yes, a little, but most of the land was leased.

Q: What kind of a village did yougrow up in?

A: Most villagers were farmers.

Q: Were there festivals?

A: Yes, there were village festivals.

Q: Were they fun?

A: It was fun to get some spending money and go out to play.

Q: What was most fun?

A: As I grew up in a poor family I didn't get much spending money, so it was fun to get spending money and go out to play.

Q: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

A: There were 5 boys and I was the fourth from the top.

Q: Do you remember about your schooldays?

A: As I liked school and as I was healthy I was one of the two out of 53 pupils who attended the school for 6 years without missing a day.

Q: What kind of subjects in school did you like?

A: I liked math and caligraphy best. I think I had good grades. I did not become a president but I became the vice-presient of the class.

Q: What kind of games did you play at school?

A: We had physical education, and I liked to play on iron bars.

Q: Did you like fishing?

A: Yes, I liked it very much. After I came from school I threw down the books and went fishing, There were many streams in the neighborhood where I could fish.

Q: What kind of fish could you catch?

A: I caught carps, catfish and eels.

Q: Did you eat them?

A: I took them home and ate them.

Q: Were there hills?

A: They were far away. It was 1 (one) ri to a hill and 1 (one) ri to the sea. They planted barley after they harvested rice. They raised two crops a year.

Q: Were there harvest festivals?

A: I never heard of them. There were festivals but no harvest festivals.

Q: Didn't you go to the sea?

A: No, it was ~~I~~ one ri to the sea. For excursion from the grade school we went to the sea and played there.

Q: When did you graduate from the junior hish school?

A: I graduated when I was 15 years old.

Q: What did you do after that?

A: I got on board a ship as an apprentice seaman for about 6 to 8 months. There was a man in my neighborhood who was on a ship and he got me the job. I carried food, washed dishes and sometimes washed seamen's clothes. When I had spare time I studied about the ship to become a seaman. When I was 18 I became a quartermaster of this 3,500 ton ship. That is why I can read the compass and the chart.

Q: How long were you on the ship?

A: Until I came to this country when I was 19 years old. During that time I went home once when I was 17 years old to see my mother for about 3 days. I haven't been back home since as I would lose my permanent residence here then.

Q: How was the life on the ship?

A: It is the lowest kind of life. I have no objection to the profession, but as the life on the ship is monotonous people gamble. When the ship arrive in a port they go to brothels, and they drink. I was disgusted with that kind of life, so when I was around 18 I decided to come to this country. As I had relatives here I was planning on having them summon me as a yobiyose, but since around 1918 yobiyose was not allowed, so I had no way but to jump from the ship. I jumped

from the ship when it arrived in Seattle.

Q: Did you swim from the ship?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: How far did you swim?

A: It was tied up at the pier, so I went under the pier and landed far away from the pier.

Q: Were you scared then?

A: Of course I was. I had about $30 which I exchanged at Diaren, but I lost it while I was swimming, and I was penniless when I landed. I was drenched to the skin when I landed. It was around 4 O'clock in the morning. A Japanese man whom I met on the street took me to a hotel. People of the hotel was kind. There was a young man who had just come from Japan, so I went to Montana with him to work on the railroad.

Q: Did those people knew then that you jumped from the ship?

A: Yes, they did. As I was wet, the manager of the hotel lend me some dry clothes and dried my clothes for me. When I left for Montana the man who found me put my clothes in a suitcase.

Q: What was your first impression of Seattle?

A: I did not go outside. I stayed at the hotel for about 2 days, and then went to Montana. I worked in Montana for a year.

Q: What kind of work did you do?

A: It was a railroad work of the Great Northern and Northern Pacific

Q: What did your work consist of?

A: The main job was to clean the ashes in the engine. Troy, where we stayed was in between White Fish and Spokane. When the train came from White Fish we cleaned the ashes in the engine and turn the engine around in the roundhouse. Then it went back to White Fish. When the train came from Spokane we cleaned it and extinguished the fire. Then we turned it around in the roundhouse. Sometimes we cleaned the oil burners. Then the train that came from Spokane would go to White Fish, and ones that came from White Fish would go to Spokane.

Q: Cleaning the ashes must have been a hard work, wasn't it?

A: Yes, it was hard.

Q: Didn't you breathe in the ashes?

A: No, because we were on top of the engine and cleaned from the opening of the fire box. When we held a handle and shook the engine the ashes fell down. Two or three months later I became an oil boy as I could speak English.

Q: Where did you learn English?

A: I learned it on the shop as we used English on the ship.

Q: Was the ship an American ship?

A: No, it was a Japanese ship, but the names of tools were in English. We read the compass in English. As I wanted to become a mate in the future I studied an English reader. I could not pronounce words well but I could read and write a little. That is why I became an oil boy. I worked on the railroad for a year.

Q: What other kind of work did you do beside the work of an oil boy?

A: I cleaned the ashes.

Q: Were you afraid you might be caught when you jumped off the ship?

A: Yes, I was. The owner of the hotel was from Hiroshima and was a very kind man. He told me that he did not have a passport from Vancouver, but he came to Seattle by the help of an immigration officer. The man whom I met on the street that morning did not seem to be a legitimate man. He went out at night and was on his way from a club or something when he saw me.

Q: Did you think you would meet a Japanese?

A: When I came to deliver a ship that was built in Japan I stayed at Milwakee Hotel in Seattle before.

Q: Then you knew the way around here, didn't you?

A: Yes, I had a little knowledge of the city.

Q: You were only 19 then. You were bold, weren't you?

A: I think I was bold as I was young. If I was older I could not have done such a thing. I think I was reckless rather than bold.

Q: Did you think you would find a way once you land?

A: Yes, because I knew there were Japanese stores and hotels. When I met this man he told me that there would be a change of policemen's shifts so he would take me to a hotel.

Q: You were wet then, weren't you?

A: Of course, I was. One restaurant was open and people were working inside, but nobody saw me. If I were caught I would have been sent back to Japan.

Q: How far was the hotel from there?

A: The hotel was only about a mile from the bay where I landed, but the place where I met this man was only about half a mile from the hotel.

Q: Did the owner of the hotel protected you?

A: Yes, he did. The following day his wife took me and a young man who came from Japan to a train depot and told us not to bow as people could tell that we just came from Japan if we bowed.

I worked on the railroad for a year and saved around $800. At first I was going back to Japan after I saved the money but I thought I was not in a hurry so I had better learn English while I was here. I quit the railroad job after a year and went to Seattle. I worked in the daytime and attended a night school which was only 3 nights a week. Then a friend told me that at the Japanese and Chinese Mission which is on the basement of the First Presbyterian Church they teach English free, so I started going there. On Sundays and Thursdays they taught us Bible, mainly the Old Testament from 7:30 to 8:30. At 8:30 we assembled and sang hymns. They gave us small pocket Bible and made us memorize the Bible verses. At the end we prayed the Lord's Prayer and went home. As I continued that for a long time I learned a lot about the Old Testament. At first there weas no Presbyterian Church. A few years later, a famous pastor, Dr. Mark Matthews helped build the Japanese and Chinese

churches. Since then they started teaching Bible at the night school of the Presbyterian church.

I quit the railroad work after a year and came to Seattle in the summer of 1920. When I saw many cars I wanted to become an auto mechanic, so I worked as the mechanic's apprentice without pay at Ikeda brothers used car business. At that time I was staying at the Buddhist Church for $6 a month with breakfast and supper. Once a week they gave us clean sheets so we changed our own sheets. I ate lunch at work.

The older Mr. Ikeda was the elder of the Japanese Congregational Church, and the younger brother was the deacon. From the folllowing Sunday after I started working I attended the Congregational Church. In those days there were 3 services on Sunday; the morning worship service, the Christian Endeavor in the afternoon and the evangelical meeting in the evening. On December 19, 1920 I was baptized by Rev. Abe. Since then I have been a Christian.

I worked at Ikeda Co. for about 10 months without pay. By the end I was getting about $10 a month as spending money. As I could not stay at the Buddhist Church I stayed in a rooming house near by. After 10 months my savings was getting low, so I quit Ikeda Co. and became a driver of a Japanese grocery store, and sometimes I drove trucks for a transport company. As I could not speak English well I became a chauffer of about 3 white families to learn to speak English. Gradually I could converse with the white people better.

When I was 25 years old I got married. I knew my wife's aunt. At that time my wife was learning etiquette in Oregon. Her aunt brought her to the church and introduced her to me and asked me to marry her. I told them that I did not have a passport, but

they said that did not matter. They asked me if I was going back to Japan some day, so I said I would, but I have not been back yet. My parents died and my wife's aunt passed away, too. We were married in March. At that time I was working at a white family. In July of that year her father in Oregon became ill and needed help, so I quit the chauffer's job and became a farmer.

Q: About how many years did you work as a chauffer?

A: I think I stayed at that family for only about a year.

Q: Did you get married at the church?

A: Yes, we were married at the Congregational Church with my pastor officiating the wedding.

Q: What do you remember about the time you worked as a chauffer?

A: I had to have a good reference in order to get a good job as they were rich families. At first I started from a cheap work. In the first house I went to were a deaf old lady and her sister. I worked there for about 4 month . I had to wash clothes and waited at the table but I put up with it as I needed the reference. For a while after that I could not find a job so I worked as a driver for a grocery store. The second family I worked at was a Jewish family. He sold Warner Brothers pictures to Seattle area. He liked Japanese. My salary at the first family was $35 a month, but he paid me $60 a month at first and raised it to $70. The third family was Mr. & Mrs. Jenkins. They had a house in Seattle but sold that house and lived in a summer house at Three Tree Point between Seattle and Tacoma. I drove Mrs. Jenkins to Seattle everyday, and Mr. Jenkins drove his Lincoln. He was a boiler maker at a shipyard.

Q: Were you married then?

A: Yes, I was.

Q: Where did your wife stay?

A: She worked as a salesgirl at Furuya Company in Seattle. Mr. Furuya liked her so much that he took her father's place in our wedding. Before he opened his store in the morning he used to gather his employees and had a pastor come and talk to them.

Q: About how many employees were there?

A: I think there were 20 to 30 employees.

Q: Was it including the employees at his bank?

A: I think bank employees were not included. It was just the store.

Q: Did your wife come from Japan?

A: Yes, she came here in 1918 when she was about 16 years old. After she came here her father told her to study English, but she didn't, saying that she would go back to Japan soon. That is why she still doesn't understand English.

Q: Did you work as a chauffer altogether about a year?

A: No, I worked almost 2 years as a chauffer. The reason why I quit the job was that when my Jewish boss went to New York for a month he wanted me and the maid to stay in the house without pay. It was all right with me, but the maid did not like the idea and said, "Let's quit", so I did.

Q: It wasn't funny then, wasn't it?

A: If I was not found by the Immigration Office for 5 years I could get a permanent residence, and 5 years had passed. If I did not go abroad I had no worry of getting sent back to Japan. That is why I enjoyed life.

Q: Did you have any funny experience or made mistakes?

A: When I washed clothes at the first house I was scolded by the lady for washing the underwears and pretty clothes together. I didn't know because she did not tell me.

Q: Was the chauffer's work very busy?

A: It was quite easy. The more I get paid the easier the work was as they were rich people.

Side 2

Q: Do you have any other recollections about the time you worked as a chauffer?

A: I don't have any special recollection.

Q: Then things went smoothly, didn't they?

A: Yes, they did. At one time I caught cold at the Jewish house. Mrs. Brin said, "I will fix you tonight" and made me a glass of lemonade. Then she said to her husband, "Mr. Brin give me the stuff in the closet." It was dry in those days and there wasn't any liquor, but she got a bottle of whiskey from the closet and put some in the lemonade, and told me to drink it and go to bed. Before I went to bed she gave me 2 Aspirin. The next morning the cold was gone. I stayed at the white people's house while I worked as a chauffer, but I did not crave for Japanese food. I ate everything.

Q: Didn't you get homesick?

A: No, I didn't. But when I recieved a letter from Japan telling me that my mother had passed away I cried.

Q: Did you correspond with your family in Japan?

A: Yes, I did. I wrote about once a month to Japan, but after I got married I did not write too often.

T: Maybe because your mother had passed away.

H: Yes, my mother had passed away, but my father was still living. My older brother worked as a guard at the Japanese Consulate in China. Later he called his younger brother and both of them worked at the Japanese Consulate. When the war broke out they came back without anything. My older brother had saved much money but it was taken away.

Q: Whereabouts in Oregon did you go to?

A: It was a place called Brooks near Salem. It was a small town with 2 or 3 stores. Japanese raised celery, lettuce and dry onion there, and there was a celery growers union[illegible] with 30 to 35 members.

Q: Was your wife's father growing celery there?

A: He was growing lettuce and celery. After he harvested lettuce he planted celery there as the second crop.

Q: Was he farming all alone?

A: He and his wife worked and hired one helper. At harvest time they hired one or two more people. It was a small farm.

Q: About how many acres were there?

A: There was only about 5½ acres.

Q: About how many years did you do that?

A: I did it for 10 years. In 1930 my wife's parents went back to Japan, so I took over after that.

Q: Did you stay there for 10 years after that?

A: No, the lease expired on 1936 so we moved to another place.

Q: Were you there during the Depression?

A: Yes, we were.

Q: Was it hard during the Depression?

A: We could not save any money, but we did not find it difficult to make a living. Celery made pretty good money, but one year when the landlord's son was the manager of the Celery Growers' Union about 30 carloads of celery got stuck in the market on the East Coast, so we had to dump the clery and on top of that had to pay about $3,000 for transport cost. After that the union was split in 2 and I belonged to the one against the landlord. Because of that I was once told by the landlord to leave.

Q: What did you do then?

A: We hired a Japanese lawyer and an American lawyer, and the staff of the new union went to the landlord and talked. He could not do anything as long as we paid the rent. The lease was out in 1936 so we moved to another land. The members of the old union stayed there until the war broke out.

We moved to another land and leased it for 15 years. The white landlord made a dike around a lake and pumped the water from it in winter so that we can prepare land for spring. About 12 or 13 Japanese went there. We signed a lease for 15 years and farmed there for 9 years. As there were bad weeds growing we could not grow onion so we spent about 3 years killing weeds. As we had to borrow money we established a Co-Op and borrowed money from it and farmed. From about the 4th year things became better, and from the 5th year some people started paying back the debts. On the 6th year which was 1941 the war broke out. As the price of onion was good, we paid off our debts, and with several thousand dollars in our pockets we went to the assembly center.

Q: Who knew about the cooperative?

A: The bank made it as they wanted to lend money.

Q: Do you have any other recollection of that period?

A: Nothing special.

Q: Onion growing was successful, wasn't it?

A: Yes, it was. At that time I was growing about 20 acres of onion and had about 15 carloads. It sold for about $2.50 to $3 a sack, so I paid off my debts.

At the time of evacuation we hired a lawyer and signed an agreement that when the government let us come back from the camp we could get back 9 more years of lease. However, the manager of Salem Celery Union, my landlord Mr. Hayes and Mr. Brown got together before the war ended and decided not to let Japanese come back because they made much money during the war leasing [illegible] to sharecroppers the land which they

were leasing to Japanese for $50 to $60. They made a new law so that Japanese could not come back. People who used to work under Mr. Jones also relocated to Ontario, Oregon area and did not go back there. I only received $1,000 for the 9-year lease.

Q: Did you pay money when you leased the land?

A: We were supposed to farm for 9 more years after we came back from camps. They let Nisei farm, but they did not let us farm, so they gave us $1,000 as consolation money.

Q: They made twice as much profit than that, didn't they?

A: Of course they made more profit than that in one year. They made a big profit during the war by sharecropping.

Q: You had to work hard to cultivate the land, didn't you?

A: Yes, we spent 3 years cultivating the land and used up all the money we had. From the fourth year we started harvesting crop, and some people paid off the debts in the fifth years. I paid off my debts when the war broke out on the sixth year and the price went up. I paid back the money I borrowed from my friends and went into camp.

Q: How did you feel when Pearl Harbor was attacked?

A: I thought why didn't the Japanese military know about America. I wondered what will they do when the war continued for a long time as there is a big distance to America, and they did not have much natural resources while America has plenty. As for myself I thought they started the war when I just got started. Of course the price of onion would not have gone up if there was no war.

Another thing I regretted was that our Christian home life was destroyed. Since our children were little we said graces before meals, so when I said, "Let's pray", they kept quiet. At church, too, when I said, "prayer" they kept still. I brought them up like that, but when we went to camp they went to eat anywhere they wanted to, and did not eat with us so they did not say graces before meals.

We went to camp in May of 1942 and in May of the following year I came out of the camp and went to Ontario. In August of that year the whole family came out. While I was in Idaho I did not stay in camp. I went digging potatoe and sugar beats. A friend in Ontario asked me to come out, so I did. There was no Japanese church in Ontario then but a missionary named Dr. Shaver held a Japanese worship service at a white church every Sunday afternoon. as there were quite a bit of Japanese living there. I wanted to take my children to Sunday School, so I took them to the First Methodist Church and attended Sunday School and worship service and came home. I contined that for about half a year. Then Miss Finley who was a missionary in Kagoshima for about 35 years asked me to join the First Methodist Church as the officers of the church wanted to welcome me. Rev. Taro Goto came from Denver then, so I asked him what he thought about me joining a white church. He said it would be all right as there is no Japanese church yet, so I joined the church. At that time I felt that if there are only a few Japanese in a white church it would be all right, but they do not welcome too many Japanese. The reason why I felt that way is because Mr. Heldress, the financial secretary of the church said, "Mr. Hashimoto

I can use one more Japanese Christian family." He hinted that he did not want many Japanese. In the meantime we decided to build a Japanese church, so Mr. Wada, Mr. Hashitani and I went around collecting donations. At that time one Nisei said to me, "You don't have to build a Japanese church now. Nisei can attend a local white church. I told him that it may be all right if not many Japanese go to the white church, but that one American told me, "I can use one more Japanese Christian family." When I said that he donated money and later became a Christian.

Q: Did the attitude of Americans change after the Pearl Harbor attack?

A: Yes, it did. In 1937 my lease was up so I moved to Gaston. There were 3 churches there, Congregational, Catholic and the Adventists. I took my children to the Congregational Church and attended the Sunday School and the worship service. At that time more than half the people of the church did not speak to me. A short time after that the F.B.I. agents came and investigated Japanese. When they finally came to my house they knew that I jumped off of the ship. They must have investigated even before the war broke out, so when the war broke out officers of Japanese Associations were interned. In those days I served as the president of the Growers Association but they did not say anything about that.

Q: Did the standstill order come out?

A: Yes, it did, so we did not go anywhere. Except one time my wife had to go to the dentist in Portland which was about 15 miles away.

Q: Did they let her go there?

A: Yes, they gave her a permission to go there.

Q: Did you go to assembly center after that?

A: Yes, we went to the assembly center in Portland.

Q: How long did you stay there?

A: We went there in May and in August we went to Minidoka, Idaho.

Q: What do you remember about the assembly center?

A: I washed dishes and at the end I became the foreman of dishwashers, After I went to Minidoka I worked outside as there was enough help in the camp.

Q: How was the food in the assembly center?

A: I didn't think food was bad as we lived in poverty.

Q: Did any trouble start for having many people cramed in one place?

A: As far as I know nothing special happened. After I went to Minidoka I heard that some people listened to shortwave radio and said Japan was winning the war, but I worked outside not long after I went there so I didn't know too much about inside.

Q: About how long after you get there that you started working outside?

A: I entered the camp in August, and by October I went out to harvest the crop.

Q: Where did you work at?

A: At Twin Falls, Idaho.

Q: Did you work alone?

A: No, a group of people worked together.

Q; Where was your family?

A: They were in the camp.

Q: How many children did you have?

A: I had 3 sons.

Q: How old were they then.

A: The oldest was born in 1929, so he was 15. The twins were born in 1929, so they were 13 years old. I worked at Twin Falls leaving my wife and children in the camp. On April 25, 1943 my 3 sons were baptized by Rev. Hayashi. In May 1943 I went back to Ontario, Oregon alone, and in August of that year the whole family came back.

Q: Then you stayed in camp only one year, didn't you?

A: Yes, we did.

Q: What kind of work did you do in Idaho?

A: I picked potatoe, apple and topped sugar beets and onion.

Q:Did theygive you enough work?

A: Yes, they did. WRA got the work for us.

Q: Were you ever oppressed?

A: No, I didn't hear of anybody being oppressed.

Q: Did you stay in Idaho about a year?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: Where did you go from there?

A: I went back to Ontario, Oregon.

Q: Could you live in Ontario?

A: Yes, we could. I could farm there, too.

Q: What did you do in Ontario?

A: I worked.

Q: What kind of work did you do?

A: A friend of mine had a large celery and onion farm and hired many Japanese, so I worked there. A Nisei named Ito who used to grow celery together in Salem was working at the personnel office there.

Q: Did you work there for a long time?

A: I worked there till April 1948, so I worked for about 4½ years.

Q: Did the war ended when you were there?

A: Yes, it did. When my oldest son, Paul, became 18 he registered for the draft, and he was drafted right away. He went to Missouri for about 6 months for basic training and then went to Korea and stayed there for about a year. When the Army built mess halls and other buildings using many Koreans Paul worked with a lieutenant supervising the Koreans. He was so loved by the Koreans that when he left they collected money and presented him with a gold ring. The reason why the Koreans loved him was because he had good communication with them and took good care of them. When he was a member of the First Methodist Church in Ontario he was loved by church members.

Paul served as the educational chairman of the church. In the following year 4 Protestant churches; Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist and Episcopal churches organized a movement called the Youth for Christ. He served as the second president of that movement. He had good communication with people. That is why he got along well with Koreans. On his way home from Korea he stopped over in Japan to visit his grandparents in Okayama. Before he left Yokohama he became ill and died there of encephalitis. He wanted to become a minister. The pastor of his church told him that he could get deferment from the Army if he went to a theological seminary, but at that time his mind was not made up to become a minister. I told him that it would not be too late to do so after he came back, so he went into the service. He was 19 years and 8 months old when he died. He was technician 4th grade in the Army.

Q: How did you feel when the war ended?

A: I thought what should come has come as I did not think the war would last too long since I knew how America was compared to Japan.

Q: Did you stay in Ontario till 1948?

A: When I was in Salem in 1931 Rev. Noji came to Salem as a minister after graduating from Princeton Theological Seminary. As we were of the same age we were good friends. When Rev. Noji went to Wintersburg, he asked me to come and see him, so I visited him. He asked me to work there and found me a job so I went back to Wintersburg and told people that I was going to move to Wintersburg. My friends tried to stop me but I moved there. I was going to move there in 1947, but as my son died in January of that year I postponed the moved to the following year.

Q: What kind of work did Rev. Noji find you?

A: It was a goldfish farm. Mr. Akiyama of Pacific Goldfish Farm was an elder of Wintersburg Presbyterian Church. He wanted a Christian worker so he asked Rev. Noji if he knew of anybody. I worked there for about 3½ years.

Q: When you moved from Ontario with your family did you go through Utah?

A: I went to Nevada but as there was snow on Donna Path I detoured and took a southern route to Barstow and to Riverside.

Q: Did you move by a car?

A: I hitched a trailer and put beds and a refrigerator on it.

Q: Did you have two sons then?

A: Yes, I did, but one of the twins did not like school so he joined the service and was stationed in Tokyo for 3 years. The other twin went to Spokane and staying at Rev. Taro Goto's home finished high school. He was 19 years old. This son, my wife and myself, 3 of us moved from Ontario to Wintersburg.

Q: How long did it take you to move?

A: It took about a day.

Q: Did you go to Rev. Noji's church then?

A: I attended Rev. Noji's church and 2 or 3 months later I became a member. Then Rev. Noji told me to become a deacon and attend the session. Mr. Furuta who was the brother-in-law of my boss had donated his land to the church. He told me that the session is for the pastor and the elders so the deacons cannot give his opinion.

Q: What were the duties of deacons?

A: Nothing much. One of the duties was to visit the widows. There were only about 15 children in Sunday School. When they started the prayer meeting only the pastor and his wife, my wife and myself were present. In 1949 Rev. Noji was called to Seattle, and after that Rev. Kanow came.

Q: What kind of work did you do at the gold fish farm?

A: At first I cleaned moss growing in the pond wearing boots, and sorted out goldfish according to the size and color. Then I became a shipping clerk. I classified the goldfish, counted them and put them in separate tubs. The following day I put them in shipping can and took them to the depot.

Q: Was it a hard work?

A: It was not too hard but it was not good for health as I had to wear the boots all day long. About 10 Mexicans were working there. The foreman was a Japanese. He took care of goldfish lay and hatch eggs and fed them. His wife was in charge of shipping grass. It was the largest business of that kind on the West coast and third largest in the country. [illegible] few years ago.

Q: Is he still in business?

A: He sold the business a few years ago. He was breeding tropical fish, also. He had about 3 large greenhouse in which he raised water plants and shipped them.

Q: Don't goldfish die easily?

A: Yes, but they are stronger than tropical fish. When they get sick they usually get well. He had a 33 acre pond in which he had the goldfish.

Q: Wasn't it hard just to go around it?

A: Yes, it was. He fenced 40 acres in which was the house, the warehouse and the pond.

Q: Did you work there for about 3½ years?

A: Yes. until I went to San Jose in September of 1951.

Q: Why did you go to San Jose?

A: I had rheumatism on my legs for being in the water long. On top of that I lost my temper at my boss's son because he told me to wait on the customers when I had too much work to do and did not know if I could make the next day's shippment. When I started working I said I could work only about 3 to 4 years. As I worked 3½ years I quit the job and went to San Jose. There I started a retail store of tropical fish buying fish from my former boss Mr. Akiyama and from a man who had a tropical fish farm near Nowalk. I operated the business from 1952 to October 1960 on the highway between Saratoga and Cupertino. Then I could not work because of high blood pressure. I did not sell the store but sold the land. As it was a highway property I sold it for 4 times the amound I paid, so I retired.

Q: Was the tropical fish business pretty good?

A: Yes, it was. as it was a small business. I bred the fish in the back

of my store. For instance, angel fish lay 700 to 1,000 eggs at a time. Once they start laying eggs they lay eggs every week. When they quit laying eggs I find a new pair of fish. If I feed them dry prepared fish food it takes 6 months before they start laying eggs, but if I give them live food they are ready to be sold in 3 months. I paid 15¢ a fish on wholesale and could sell them for 30 cents but I sold them for 25¢. It is difficult to hatch catfish eggs but I learned the secret so I hatched a lot of them. The business was good. At Christmas time newspapers asked me if I wanted to advertise but I didn't because if I did more customers would come and I had to hire help and I would lose money. Customers were good advertisement. Especially children were good customers. They used to buy small fish like guppies. When they came and told me that their fish died I used to give them another one. I sold many fish tanks to the neighborhood highschool, and at carnival time they bought many gold fish. It was good business but I became ill so I told one of my twins to take over the business. He did not want the business as he did not have patience to wait on the customers. In order to have good business we have to treat the customers as if they are always right. The other twin was hired by the Lockheed Company when it was opened in Sunnyvale and had been working there until recently he moved to Burbank. The one who went to the service did not have schooling so he has been working for the Greyhound bus as a ticket agent.

Q: What have you been doing since you retired in 1960?

A: I have not been doing anything since then. My wife is doing domestic week. She is 71 years old now. I have been helping the church

publishing the Japanese language bulletin, serving as the chairman of the Japanese language division for over 10 years and liaison between Japanese speaking people and Nisei. Since 1972 my health has not been good and I became forgetful so I cannot do responsible work. Mr. Eiichi Hayashi came from Oakland, so I had him take over my work.

Q: Is there anything you want to tell me from your record?

A: In July, 1926 I moved from Seattle to Oregon. For the first two years there was no Japanese church. In August 1928 Rev. Norisue was invited as a pastor for the first time. Japanese were not able to invite him, but the General Council of Christian Women of Salem invited the pastor and paid the pastor's salary and the expense of the manse, and started the church there, At first there were only 8 members. In the following year 4 people including my wife were baptized by Rev. Norisue. I was asked to be the first Sunday School principal. I said I was not qualified, but I served it for a year. After a year Rev. Norisue went to Japan. I served as the Sunday School principal until Rev. Niwa came in November 1929. Then a Nisei lady named Mrs. Watanabe became the principal. In 1931 Rev. Noji came. Rev. Horikoshi came to Salem church from Japan in 1938.

Q: Did you serve the Japanese Association or J.A.C.L.?

A: No, I didn't. As I worked for the church I did not have time for that. While I was in Salem I was elected as the head of the Educational Department but I did not work.

Q: Aren't you young for an Issei?

A: Yes, because I was a yobiyose.

Q: Were most Isseis single?

A: Yes, they were. Even when I got married there were many single men. I did not want to marry a Nisei because many Nisei women wanted to marry white men. There were many single men, and not many men got married.

Q: How were their lives?

A: Not many men lived straight.

Q: Did they lead dissipated lives?

A: Yes, many did.

Q: Were there many gambling houses and brothels?

A: Yes. When I went to Montana I found gambling houses and brothels open.

Q:Were they Japanese gambling houses and brothels?

A: No, they were the white establishments. In Japanese labor camps people gambled. I thought it was terrible.

Q: Was it because there were no women?

A: Partly because of that. At first women could come here as picture brides, but that was prohibited so there was no way of getting married. Men who had money went back to Japan to take wives and brought them here.

Q: Were there many stories about picture marriage?

A: Yes, there were. But as it was too far to go back to Japan many were compelled to bear silently.

Q: What kind of stories did you hear about the picutre marriage?

A: Some men sent somebody else's picutre, or some brides were put to work as soon as they got here and had to work with tears in their eyes.

Q: Did some brides run away?

A: I heard that there were such women, too.

Q: Looking back, when was the hardest time in your life?

A: When I moved from Salem to a newly-reclaimed land I used up my money and had to borrow money and did not even have money to buy grocery. At first I could borrow money from the bank with my friend as a guarantor, but later I could not even do that. We organized a union and managed to farm. The union could lend us money to farm but not grocery money, so sometimes I could not even buy bread. I had to borrow money from a real good friend. Then a lady gave us some money.

Q: Was she a Japanese?

A: Yes. She was a wife of a man who did not take care of his family. I think she could understand our hardships as she had a hard time herself.

Q: Did her husband gamble?

A: Yes, he gambled and dissipated.

Q: Did she have many children?

A: She had 6 children.

Q: Did she make a living?

A: Yes, she did. I helped them when I could.

Q: Were you outrageous when you were put in a camp?

A: No, as we were enemy aliens we could not help it if we were put in a camp, but I was angry about putting Niseis in camps.

Q: Was your oldest son drafted?

A: Yes, he was. He had not graduated from high school but when he registered for the draft he was drafted. After he died he recieved a graduation certificate from his high school, but it was no use, but I was not bitter.

Q: Didn't many people think it was outrageous to put Nisei in camps and draft them?

A: During the war people thought so, but my son was drafted when Japan surrendered. I wrote a little about that in the book "Maboroshi wa Kiezu". (Vision Does not Die Out)

Q: As an Issei what do you want to teach Niseis and Sanseis?

A: I came here with an ambition of making money, but when I came here and saw the condition of this country I thought there was no hurry in going back to Japan. In order to stay in this country I thought I should learn English, so I quit the railroad after a year and went to Seattle. I am not good at making money. One reason I came to California was because Rev. Noji called me, but the other reason was to live in a good climate as I was not good at making money

From my experience I could not make money but I became a Christian through my boss Mr. Ikeda who was the elder of the church. Of course I studied Bible at the Presbyterian Church before I became a Christian. I think I found something more important than money. God chose me through my boss, so even if I lose all my money I have something that cannot be taken away from me. I may not be able to leave fortune to my children but I hope I give them faith. I would like to recommend young people to come to Christianity.

Christianity is changing from traditional to contemporary but I think we should have something that we can lean on. For instant, for Christians it is God.

T: Some Sanseis and Yonseis are studing about Isseis.

H: Yes, they are. I am very grateful that they are helping Isseis through senior centers. I am glad the relationship between Japanese and Americans have changed from the time Isseis had to bear the exclusion.

T: I think Isseis had a hard times fighting the exclusion.

H: Yes. For instance, when I went downtown as a chauffer they asked my boss, "Why don't you hire a white man?" My boss used to say from the back seat, "Is it any of your business?" That happened all the time.

Q: It has become better compared to those days, hasn't it?

A: Yes. It is like heaven now. Now we have social security so we can live without worries even if we don't have money. There has been a great change since 30 years ago.

T: Isseis worked like mad, didn't they??

H: That is why I think the church was a great help to me. At the night school of the Presbyterian Church we had a Christmas party with Chinese students. The school was called the Japanese Chinese Mission and we were in the same room but in different classes. After the class we assembled together and read Bible, sang hymns and said the Lord's prayer together.

Q: What do you think about Sanseis being proud to be Japanese?

A: I think Isseis had inferiority complex, but I don't think Niseis and Sanseis have that.

Q: Do you think it is good that Sanseis are proud of their heritage?

A: I think it is good to be aware of their heritage and treasure the culture, but they should not think they are greater than the white people because they are Japanese. I think it is good if they are proud of good points of Japanese just as there are good point of the white people.

Q: Is there anything you want to teach Sanseis and Yonseis?

A: We lived in our time, Niseis are living in their time and Sanseis have their own way of thinking. When Niseis were young there was no such thing as going to the moon, but to Sanseis going to the moon is an everyday occurance. Toys are different, too. It is important to know the good points of your heritage, but since they are living in America, I think they should contribute to this country

I think it will be like that now that there are more mixed marriages. When I was in Ontario I sorted onion with 2 Nisei boys. They were talking about dates. They said it is expensive to date with Japanese girls, but they do not need money to date with American girls. They asked me, "What would you do if your son wants to marry a white girl? Will you get angry and stop him?" I answered, "As I am a Christian I wish my son will marry a Japanese Christian girl, but when my son reach the marrying age and wants to marry a white girl I cannot do anything about it. Even if I stop them, they can go to Reno and get married. It is not my marriage but my son's, so I will not say anything about it." They were surprised and said, "Is that so. Most Isseis don't say such thing." While my son Paul was going to the Methodist Church there was a white girl named Helen. Her sister Ethel liked him and took good care of him. Then Helen became jealous and stayed around Paul all the time. At one time when I went home I found Paul and Helen there. After Helen went home I said to Paul, "Helen loves you, doesn't she?" Paul said, "That's cat's love."

Later I found Helen's letter to Paul asking him to marry her. Soon after that Paul was drafted into service. I heard that Helen married a white boy named Tim and they are living happily.

Q: Do you think you have different opinion from other Isseis?

A: The reason I think this way is because I have seen some parents who oppose their sons' marriages disown them. Then they go away and get married and don't come to the house. A few years later the parents gets lonesome and children start coming to visit. Since I have seen so many cases like that I have come to think this way.

Q: Did more than half of Isseis do that to Niseis?

A: they did. At least half of them did that.

Q: There are many marriages with Chinese, but do you think those strict Isseis did not want their sons to marry Chinese either?

A: No, I think they had a kind of prejudice.

Q: Do you think those Isseis would rather have their sons marry white girls than Chinese?

A: No, I think they would prefer Chinese or Koreans from the whites because their children would not suffer as much. I felt sorry for the children with red hair born between Japanese and the whites. They were given hard times.